

“‘When is a meadow not a meadow?’”:
Dark Ecology and Fields of Conflict in French Renaissance Poetry’

Jennifer Oliver (St. John’s College, Oxford)

I. ‘I’ve been kicked in the biosphere’

Political and environmental discourse of the French Renaissance is triangulated through the bodily imagery used to describe both state and landscape. In Ronsard’s poetic reworkings of Age-of-Gold lore, foundational moments of agricultural ‘sin’¹ are brought into dialogue with the religious polemic surrounding France’s civil wars; later in the sixteenth century, the ‘body’ of the French landscape, like the body politic, suffers the ravages of the continuing wars, as lamented by d’Aubigné. The image of entrails returns insistently; employed, twisting and turning, both to figure France’s internal turmoil (as vipers erupting fatally from their mother’s belly) and as the site of affect in the face of civil violence. These visceral preoccupations anticipate the tragicomic refrain in *Dark Ecology* (in which Timothy Morton argues that at the core of human-inflicted ecological destruction lies a toxic pattern of ‘agrilogistic’ thought): ‘I’ve been kicked in the biosphere’.² Crucially, I will argue, it is also possible to attend to non- and differently-agrilogistic voices of the sixteenth century: in *De re metallica* (1556), Georgius Agricola defends mining against a plethora of Classical poetic and philosophical invectives, arguing that it *is* ‘natural’ for man to plunder the ‘bowels of the earth’.³ In examining the shifting and messy web of metaphors used on both ‘sides’ of the French conflict, this chapter aims to demonstrate the aptitude of Renaissance analogy to richly illustrate Morton’s principle of ecological resistance to ‘impossibly tidy boundaries’: ‘there is no single, independent, definable point at which the meadow stops being a meadow’.⁴

Where does one commonplace end, and another begin? In a passage that has itself become something of a *topos* among scholars of the French Renaissance, and which is certainly one of the most vivid depictions of France’s deadly warring factions, Agrippa d’Aubigné in his epic civil war poem *Les Tragiques* famously describes a beleaguered Mother France, her breast torn apart by her fighting sons. Her body seems to suffer more from the conflict than do the bodies of either of her children. Her body is the battlefield. As a result her usually nourishing milk is spoiled at its source.

Je veux peindre la France une mère affligée,
Qui est entre ses bras de deux enfants chargée.
Le plus fort, orgueilleux, empoigne les deux bouts
Des tétins nourriciers; puis à force de coups
D’ongles, de poings, de pieds, il brise le partage
Dont nature donnait à son besoin l’usage;
Ce voleur acharné, cet Esau malheureux
Fait dégat du doux lait qui doit nourrir les deux,
Si que, pour arracher à son frère la vie,
Il méprise la sienne et n’en a plus envie.

Mais son Jacob, pressé d'avoir jeuné meshui,
 Ayant dompté longtemps en son cœur son ennui,
 A la fin se défend, et sa juste colère
 Rend à l'autre un combat dont le champ est la mère.⁵

(I want to paint France as a tormented mother,/ carrying two children in her arms./
 The stronger of the two arrogantly seizes her/ two nourishing teats ; then by
 scratching,/ punching, and kicking, he tears up the share/ provided by nature to
 meet his needs ;/ this remorseless thief, this wretched Esau/ lays waste to the
 sweet milk that ought to feed them both,/ such that, to rip his brother's life away,/
 he cares nothing for his own, and is ready to die./ But his Jacob, under strain of
 starvation,/ having long kept his anguish inside,/ at last defends himself, and his
 rightful anger/ gives battle to the other, on the field that is their mother.)

The focus of these lines takes a *blason*-like poetic impulse of fragmentary bodily description to its extreme: the limbs of sons and mother intertwine, as 'Esau', from within his mother's embrace, uses the parts of his body as weapons against her. The final line here introduces the image that forms the centrepiece of what will follow in this chapter: the mother's body is curiously called to stand both for the political body of France and for the landscape ravaged by the effects of the disintegration of that political body.⁶

The profound ambivalence of this passage is reflected in the inescapably interconnected mesh of images and bodies in play. In the context of a civil war, not (quite) cutting off his nose to spite his face, 'cet Esau malheureux' nonetheless inevitably inflicts violence on himself, as on his mother, in giving vent to his fraternal rage. By a strange, inverted reciprocity, d'Aubigné, taking the part of the starved and oppressed 'Jacob', defends as 'juste' his response, generating an apologetics of the conflict he simultaneously deplores. Some hundred lines later, this maternal-corporeal imagery is overlaid with that of the ship of state, which, scuttled by the dominant Catholic side, expresses the same self-destructive impulse—encapsulated in the viscerally potent coinage 'autochire'—that characterizes the civil conflict.

En cela le vainqueur ne demeurant plus fort,
 Que de voir son haineux le premier à la mort
 Qu'il seconde, autochire, aussitôt de la sienne,
 Vainqueur, comme l'on peut vaincre à la Cadméeenne.⁷

(In this the victor wins out long enough/ to see the object of his hatred meet with
 death,/ which he then follows immediately, self-destroying, with his own,/ a
 victor, but of a Cadmean victory.)

Evoking the myth of Cadmus, related in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which the soldiers that sprouted from the serpent's teeth sown by Cadmus set to fighting among themselves in 'civil strife' ('iuuentus | sanguineam tepido plangebant pectore matrem'; 'That prime of youth [...] lay writhing on | Their mother's bloodstained bosom'),⁸ d'Aubigné articulates for a second time a particular anxiety concerning fertility gone wrong. As the poet has his muse, Melpomène, cry:

O France désolée! ô terre sanguinaire! [...]
Sur ton pis blanchissant ta race se débat,
Là le fruit de ton flanc fait le champ du combat.⁹

(O desolate France ! o bloodied land ! [...]/ Your brood are locked in strife over
your blanching bosom,/ there the fruit of your belly makes of it the field of battle.)

France's warring factions, whether polluting Mother France's natural bounty or springing nightmarishly from the teeth-seeds of a former, monstrous, conflict, are both engaged in, or are products of, a twisted agricultural process. D'Aubigné's extraordinarily, weirdly compacted syntax here—'de ton flanc' being made to do the double work of describing the origins of 'le fruit' and the setting of the 'combat'—highlights a disturbing point: the 'fields' of France have born a treacherous harvest. What is interior to the nation, and 'natural' to the landscape, can no longer be trusted; emerging from the inside, it lays waste to the surface.

The proliferation in Renaissance texts of images that challenge internal/external (and indeed human/nonhuman) bodily boundaries is of course the subject of copious analysis such as that by Mikhail Bakhtin, in *Rabelais and His World*.¹⁰ But in the specific, weaponized and environmentalized context of the wars of religion, it seems that even more is at stake—both for sixteenth-century poets and for twenty-first-century readers and eco-critics—in the assertion of the porosity of these boundaries than has yet been explored. At such moments, the concerns of both groups resonate in productive, exciting ways, as when Morton articulates in *Dark Ecology* the same kind of untidy, inescapable, mother-guts-environment association seen above in d'Aubigné's verse:

One's mother's body *is* the biosphere. And my stomach that feels like it gets kicked really violently with news of extinction isn't my stomach. I'm not talking about little me, the appearance, suffering here. My stomach is also this biosphere. It implies all the not-me beings.

I've been kicked in the biosphere.¹¹

French writers and thinkers of the sixteenth century deal in these kinds of 'uncanny', 'weird', or 'loopy' (as Morton calls them) logics as a matter of course.¹² The messily enmeshed images in play in the poetic description here pose a challenge to certain rather overly tidy conceptions of Renaissance analogy, such as that evoked by Foucault in 'Le prose du monde':

Jusqu'à la fin du XVI^e siècle, la ressemblance a joué un rôle bâtisseur dans le savoir de la culture occidentale. C'est elle qui a conduit pour une grande part l'exégèse et l'interprétation des textes; c'est elle qui a organisé le jeu des symboles, permis la connaissance des choses visibles et invisibles, guidé l'art de les représenter. Le monde s'enroulait sur elle-même: la terre répétait le ciel, les visages se mirant dans les étoiles, et l'herbe enveloppant dans ses tiges les secrets qui servaient à l'homme.¹³

(‘Up to the end of the sixteenth century, resemblance played a constructive role in the knowledge of Western culture. It was resemblance that largely guided exegesis and the interpretation of texts; it was resemblance that organized the play of symbols, made possible knowledge of things visible and invisible, and controlled the art of representing them. The universe was folded in upon itself: the earth echoing the sky, faces seeing themselves reflected in the stars, and plants holding within their stems the secrets that were of use to man.’)¹

The ‘Renaissance episteme’ described by Foucault often proves rather too rigid to describe the wealth and variety of expression across literary genres and forms in the period, and indeed has been deftly dismantled by Ian Maclean: ‘[Foucault’s] quasi-Kantian insistence on conditions of possibility, on formal, preconceptual constraints, and on the limiting factor of the imagination may make him blind to endoxical knowledge, with its untidy edges and imprecisions’.¹⁴ Of course, this challenge to neat frameworks is echoed by that posed by the past decades of eco-critical thought, following the calls of the likes of Bruno Latour, who in 1991 read ‘[I]es affaires embrouillées’ (‘mixed-up affairs’) of a daily newspaper as giving the lie to conceptions of disciplinary divisions or ‘compartiments’ (‘compartments’): ‘Toute la culture et toute la nature s’y trouvent rebrassées chaque jour’ (‘All of culture and all of nature get churned up again every day’).¹⁵ If the contemporary ‘nonhuman turn’ asks: ‘What if Whitehead, instead of Heidegger, had set the agenda for postmodern thought?’,¹⁶ one of the answers to the question posed by Louisa Mackenzie (‘What can the French Renaissance do for ecocriticism?’), as discussed in the introduction to this volume, is perhaps to offer, in however limited a way, access to pre-Heideggerian, and indeed pre-Kantian, pre-Cartesian, possibilities for thought.

Pursuing this line of thought, this chapter thus explores interactions between human, political, and environmental bodies in the poetry of Ronsard and d’Aubigné, asking how the messiness of corporeal analogies for the physical and political landscape might be seen to perpetuate—or resist—the ‘feedback loop’ identified by Morton in the ‘virus’ of agrilogistic thought.¹⁷ But first, it will be instructive to consider the use of medicalized bodily analogy in political discourse of the period, not least because, in the story of anxiety about poetic, political, and environmental inheritance that unfolds below, the writer in question stands, for Ronsard at least, as a certain kind of father figure.

II. ‘Le corps de [n]ostre estat, pasle, maigre et deffiguré’

At the time of France’s civil wars it was a commonplace to describe the conflicts as ‘intestins’. As John O’Brien has shown, Michel de Montaigne returns several times to this image of internal disorder, which is made all the more striking by the fact that he also uses the term to describe the pain he experiences as a sufferer of gallstones.²¹ This visceral imagery forms part of the broader analogy of the ‘body politic’, which, in these times of turmoil, is described as suffering either an infection or an imbalance of humours, and as consequently being in need of medication, purgation, or amputation, depending on the ‘doctor’ whose advice was sought. One such self-styled diagnostician was Michel de

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L'Hospital, the *chancelier de France* who, in his political discourses, showed himself to be a mediator figure, prescribing purgation or 'amputation' not of Protestants, nor of Catholic *ligueurs*, but, diplomatically enough, of the unnamed 'séditieux' whom he identified as the root cause of the ulcer of the body politic:

Il y a beaucoup de choses qui sont en apparence dures et aigres, qui sont neantmoins salutaires [...]: Par mesme façon les meilleures et plus saines medecines sont les plus ameres [...]. Car si nous sommes tous comme un corps, duquel le roy est le chef: il est beaucoup meilleur couper le membre pourri, que permettre qu'il gaste et corrompe les autres et leur face souffrir mort. S'il y avoit un homme pestiferé, ou infect de lepre, vous le chasseriez de vostre ville: Il y a plus grand'raison de chasser les seditieux.²²

(There are many things that appear to be harsh and sour, and yet they are healthful [...] : In the same way, the best and most wholesome medicines are the most bitter [...]. For if we are all like a body, of which the king is the head, is it much better to cut off the rotten limb, than to let it spoil and corrupt the others and cause them to die. If there were a man infected with the plague, or leprosy, you would chase him from your town: there is even more reason to chase away the seditious.)

As Loris Petris observes, the popularity of this metaphor in the period is matched only by the variety and 'souplesse' of its usage; even within the corpus of L'Hospital's *Discours*, it is made to argue for radical 'medical' measures (as above), and then, little over a year later, to counsel against armed civil conflict, 'chose qui est non seulement repugnante au nom de chrestien que nous portons, mais à toute l'humanité', in a passage that packs an affective punch through its additive amplification:

[D]e quels gens de guerre composerons-nous nostre armee? Tels, que nous cuiderons estre de nostre costé, tant capitaines de soldats, seront peut-estre du parti contraire. Et encores qu'ils soyent de mesme religion que nous, je ne sçay comment l'on les pourroit faire combattre quand ils verroyent de l'autre costé ou leurs peres ou leurs fils ou leurs freres ou leurs femmes ou leur plus proches. Et en oultre, la victoire, de quelque costé qu'elle fust, ne pourroit estre que calamiteuse, estant dommageable tant aux vainqueurs qu'aux vaincus, tout ainsi que si les parties du corps se defaisoyent l'une l'autre.²³

(From what warriors will we build our army ? Those who we believe to be on our side, captains as well as soldiers, might be for the other party. And even if they share our religion, I don't know how they could be made to fight when they saw on the other side their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their wives or their dearest friends. And besides, victory, on whichever side, could only ever be calamitous, being as damaging to the victors as to the vanquished, just as though the parts of the body were destroying one another.)

But there will be no such conciliatory tone in any of the texts in question in what follows. The rest of this chapter will focus on two poets—the Catholic Ronsard, and the Reformist d'Aubigné—who describe the conflicts ravaging France in confrontational and peculiarly bodily terms. As seen in the opening example, the body that figures the contested political and physical space of France is distinctly female, and—not coincidentally—is often elided with that other great symbolic female body: Mother Nature. In particular, the analysis here will be concerned with the significance of intestines, or entrails, as a rich locus of overlapping environmental, political, and affective imagery, through which the works of these poets seem to speak to and recall one another, across the decades and indeed across confessional divides.

III. 'Ulcerant par sillons les entrailles encloses'

Ronsard's engagement with the French landscape is, in his earlier works at least, more concerned with the exploitation of natural resources than with political strife; most strikingly, perhaps, he took a particularly ferocious stance against the deforestation of the Gâtine, the region of his ancestors.²⁴ In his odes, Ronsard repeatedly deplores mining as opening up the 'entrailles' of rocks, in much the same way—though to different ends—that Georgius Agricola writes of plundering 'the bowels of the earth'. In Book I of *De re metallica*, Agricola gives voice to the critics of mining whose minds he would hope to change:

Terra non occultat et ab oculis remouet ea quæ hominu[m] generi utilia sunt et necessaria, set ut benefica benigna[que] mater maxima largitate sundit ex sese, et in aspectum lucem[que] profert herbas, legumani, fruges, fructus arboru[m]: at fossilia in profunda penitus abstrudit, eruenda igitur non sunt. Quia vero ipsa eruunt homines scelerati, quos ut poetæ loquuntur, ferrea ista ætas progignit, Ovidius eam audaciam merito insequitur his versibus.

Nec tantum segetes alimenta[que] bebita diues
Poscebatur humus, sed itum est in viscera terrae,
Quas[que] recondiderat, Stygiis[que] admoverat undis,
Effodiuntur opes, irritamenta malorum.
Iam[que] nocens ferrum ferro[que] nocentius aurum
Prodierat, prodit belum.

('The earth does not conceal and remove from our eyes those things which are useful and necessary to mankind, but on the contrary, like a beneficent and kindly mother she yields in large abundance from her bounty and brings into the light of day the herbs, vegetables, grains and fruits, and the trees. The minerals on the other hand she buries far beneath in the depths of the ground; therefore, they should not be sought. But they are dug out by wicked men who, as the poets say, are the products of the Iron Age'. Ovid censures their audacity in the following lines:—

And not only was the rich soil required to furnish corn and due sustenance, but men even descended into the entrails of the earth, and they dug up riches, those incentives to vice, which the earth had hidden and removed

to the Stygian shades. Then destructive iron came forth, and gold, more destructive than iron; then war came forth.)²⁵

For Agricola, who amasses a wealth of such classical poetic arguments against his own cause as a metallurgist, many of these may be countered by the claim that man's 'natural' element is the earth, rather than the sea: 'Indeed, it is far stranger that man, a terrestrial animal, should search the interior of the sea than the bowels of the earth'.²⁶ But for Ronsard, the moral framing is quite different; drawing on the same Ovidian and Virgilian imagery of the Age of Gold, and mankind's descent from it into the Age of Iron, he laments the advent of technologies including mining, seafaring, and agriculture.²⁷

In Ronsard's *Hymne de la Justice*, the 'torments' and 'ulcerations' inflicted on the entrails of the earth by the plough are definitively the kinds of outrage against Nature that were not perpetrated in the Age of Gold:

Dieu fist naistre Justice en l'âge d'or ça bas
Quand le peuple innocent encor ne vivoit pas
Comme il fait en peché, et quend la vice encore
N'avoit passé les bords de la boete à Pandore:
Quand ces mots *Tien* et *Mien* en usage n'esoyent,
Et quand les Laboureurs du soc ne tourmentoyent
Ulcerant par sillons les entrailles encloses
Des champs qui produisoient de leur gré toutes choses
Et quand les Mariniers ne pallisoient encor'
Sur le dos de Tethys pour amasser de l'or.²⁸

(God created Justice down there in the Age of Gold,/ when the innocent people did not live/ as they do now in sin, and when vice had not yet escaped from Pandora's box:/ when the words 'yours' and 'mine' were not yet in use,/ and when labourers did not torment/ and ulcerate with furrows the enclosed entrails/ of the fields, which produced of their own accord all that was needed,/ and when mariners did not yet throng/ the flanks of Tethys to go forth and gather gold.)

The descent from the Age of Gold to the Age of Iron, which in classical sources is marked by the advent of first agriculture and then warfare, is inscribed in both cases on the corporeally depicted surface and depths of the landscape: both the ploughing of fields and (through mining) the forging of weapons are associated with the gouging of the tender flesh of the earth.²⁹

[PLACE ILLUSTRATION 1 HERE]

Of course, Ronsard's ideal vision of man living in harmony with Nature is doomed to fail, and Justice, here redolent of d'Aubigné's Mother France, launches a tirade against the 'peuple avorton' who have ravaged and abused her bounty, and will be reduced to tilling the soil.³⁰

Meschant peuple avorton, disoit-elle, est-ce ainsi

Qu'à moy fille de Dieu tu rens un grand merci
 De t'avoir si long temps couvé dessous mes ailes,
 Te nourrissant du lait de mes propres mammelles?
 Je m'en-vole de terre, et je te dis adieu,
 Adieu peuple avorton, je t'assure que Dieu
 Vangera mon depart d'un horrible tempeste,
 Que ja desja son bras eslance sur ta teste.
 Las! où tu soulois vivre en repos planteureux,
 Tu vivras desormais en travail malheureux:
 Il faudra que tes bœufs aux champs tu aiguillonnes,
 Et que du soc aigu la terre tu sillonnes,
 Et que soir et matin le labeur de ta main
 Nourrisse par sueur ta miserable fain:
 Pour la punition de tes fautes malines
 Les champs ne produiront que ronces et qu'espines[.]³¹

(Vile, stunted people, she said, is this how/ you thank me, the daughter of God,/ for having kept you so long safely under my wing,/ feeding you with the milk from my own breasts?/ I am taking flight from the Earth, I bid you farewell,/ goodbye runtish race, and I assure you that God/ will avenge my departure with a horrific storm,/ which his hand is already hurling down on you./ Alas! Where you were accustomed to living in restful abundance,/ now you will live in wretched toil:/ you will have to spur on your cattle in the fields,/ and furrow the earth with sharpened plough,/ and day and night your hard labour/ will have to feed your miserable hunger:/ in punishment for your malign wrongdoings,/ the fields will produce only thorns and brambles.)

In accordance with Age of Gold mythology³² the tools of agriculture arrive alongside the first weapons of war, as mankind sinks further into sin, and enters the Age of Iron. For Ronsard, then, the horrors of warfare are no more than the natural conclusion of the decline of mankind, and so the kind of feminized 'champ de bataille' represented by d'Aubigné's Mother France is, in some senses, a distant reincarnation of Ronsard's personified – and embodied, in avian-mammalian form – figure of Justice.³³

If conflict in general is symptomatic of man's fall from the Age of Gold in Ronsard's poetry, 'intestine' civil wars do seem to hold particular weight. In an invective against the acolytes of 'Predicans' including Théodore de Bèze in the *Continuation du Discours des Misères de ce temps* (1562-3), France's maternal entrails seem to come alive in an uncanny way: baby vipers, bursting forth fatally from their mother's belly, move the image of 'troubled intestines' on to something altogether more deadly.

Vous ressemblez encor à ces jeunes viperes,
 Qui ouvrent en naissant le ventre de leurs meres:
 Ainsi en avortant vous avez fait mourir
 La France vostre mere en lieu de la nourrir.³⁴

(What's more, you resemble those young vipers,/ who, in being born, rip open their mothers' bellies:/ in aborting yourselves in this way, you have killed/ your mother France, instead of feeding her.)

Later in the same decade, in an epitaph for the Duc de Montmorency (1567/8), an old soldier killed at the Bataille de Saint-Denis, Ronsard's France is no longer a body suffering an internal sickness caused by warring factions, but rather attacks itself, Cato-like, with a weapon of war:

Quand les François par civiles batailles
Tournoyent le fer en leurs propres entrailles,
Espoinçonnez d'infernale fureur [...]³⁵

(When the French, in civil wars,/ twisted the blade in their own entrails,/ spurred by infernal fury [...].)

This last description draws together elements of the other metaphors and analogies discussed so far in a kind of Escher-esque, looping play of images: France holds the sword, a sign (within the symbolic system of Age of Gold mythology) of social, environmental, and political decline, and, in twisting it, tears at the entrails that stand at once for the abundance of Nature and for the internal, factional conflict played out on France's landscape. While for Ronsard the source of blame is distinctly identifiable, his constant recourse to corporeal and ecological analogy speaks of the difficulty in isolating an element so fundamentally imbricated in its surroundings; as this final image shows, Ronsard recognizes what Michel de L'Hospital had identified several years earlier: to attack the internal cause would be to attack the body as a whole.

IV: 'Seulement mes entrailles vous ont senti'

Such destruction is all but inevitable for Ronsard's Reformist counterpart, in both the political and the aesthetic realms: in the prefatory notes to the edition quoted here, Frank Lestringant presents d'Aubigné's poetic project in *Les Tragiques* as, among other things, a trashing of Ronsard's (and his own, juvenile) poetic landscape:

Du jardin poétique légué par Ronsard et amoureusement cultivé par les émules de la Pléiade, bruissant d'eaux vives et noyé d'ombrages, il ne reste qu'un paysage sinistré, une terre calcinée et à jamais stérile. Animé par une rage iconoclaste, d'Aubigné transporte jusque dans le verger des Muses la guerre civile qui fait rage au-dehors, à travers toute la France des guerres de Religion. C'est avec un bel entrain qu'il saccage les parterres dessinés par lui-même dans *Le Printemps*[...]³⁶

(Of the poetic garden bequeathed by Ronsard and lovingly cultivated by the disciples of the Pléiade, murmuring with running water and drenched in shadows, remains only a damaged landscape, a charred and forever sterile earth. Stirred by an iconoclastic rage, d'Aubigné transports into the orchard of the Muses the civil

war that rages on outside, across all of France during the wars of religion. With great enthusiasm, he trashes the flowerbeds that he himself had sketched in *Le Printemps*.

D'Aubigné's apocalyptic vision calls for a return to certain images used by Ronsard to recount the creation narrative: through the ravaged body-landscape, Revelation recalls Genesis. A few lines after the passage that opened this chapter, the development of d'Aubigné's initial affective image sees Mother France decry her sons' destruction and bloodying of her body:

Elle dit: 'Vous avez, félons, ensanglanté
Le sein qui vous nourrit et qui vous a porté;
Or vivez de venin, sanglante géniture,
Je n'ai plus que du sang pour votre nourriture'.³⁷

(She says: 'You felons have bloodied/ the breast that bore you and feeds you;/ now, bloody progeny, live on venom,/ for I have only blood left for you to feed on.)

In lines that emphasize the conceptual elasticity of 'sein' (incorporating both womb and breast), like 'entrailles', the intertwining of limbs noted earlier finds its echo in the mingling of blood with the maternal milk, a commixture of bodily fluids that brings these lines into the realm of the abject.³⁸ This sense of dread at the risk of the surface boundaries of the body politic being dissolved from within ('meurtrier de soi-même', ('self-destroyer'))³⁹ unfolds further in the next image; of a disease-riddled, zombie-like giant, the source of whose dysfunction is plainly located at its core, in the 'ventre':

Son corps est combattu, à soi-même contraire:
Le sang pur a le moins, le flegme et la colère
Rendent le sang non sang; le peuple abat ses lois,
Tous nobles et tous Rois, sans nobles et sans Rois;
La masse dégénère en la mélancolie;
Ce viel corps tout infect plein de la discrasie,
[...]
Ce ventre dans lequel tout se tire, tout entre,
Ce faux dispensateur des communs excréments
N'envoie plus aux bords les justes aliments:
Des jambes et des bras les os sont sans moelle,
Il ne va plus en haut pour nourrir la cervelle
Qu'un chime venimeux, dont le cerveau nourri
Prend matière et liqueur d'un champignon pourri.⁴⁰

(Its body is conflicted, pitted against itself:/ it has little pure blood, phlegm and choler /make its blood blood no longer ; the people overthrow its laws,/ all are noblemen and kings, without noblemen, without kings;/ the mass degenerates into melancholy;/ the old infected body riddled with discrasia,/

[...] This belly into which all is drawn, everything enters,/ this treacherous dispenser of the public excrements/ no longer sends the rightful nourishment to the peripheries:/ the bones of the arms and legs are without marrow,/ all that now goes above to feed the brains/ is a poisonous vapour, and the brain feeding on this/ takes on substance and humor of a rotten mushroom.)

If Ronsard's anxiety about France's treacherous progeny earlier found expression in the body horror of vipers erupting from a mother's belly, d'Aubigné further pushes the enmeshing of the body politic with the nonhuman in this vision of mycotic invasion. More than ever, the chances of political-medical remedy seem remote.

In the initial image of Mother France, the impact of the extended corporeal metaphor is heightened by the woman's specifically maternal vulnerability, an effect heightened through the multiplying of intestinal imagery, since elsewhere in the poem 'entrailles' are not only shown to hold physical significance, but are also, metonymically, symbolic of affective response, as in d'Aubigné's account of a son's response to the sight of his dying father:

L'enfant rompt ces propos: 'Seulement mes entrailles
Vous ont senti, dit-il, et les rudes batailles
De la prochaine mort n'ont point épouvanté
L'esprit instruit de vous, le cœur par vous planté.
Mon amour est ému, l'âme n'est pas émue;
Le sang, non pas le sens, se trouble à votre vue;
Votre blanche vieillesse a tiré de mes yeux
De l'eau, mais mon esprit est un fourneau de feux[.]'⁴¹

(The child interrupts this speech: 'Only my entrails/ felt you[r pain], he says, and the rough battles/ of imminent death did not trouble/ the mind trained by you, the heart steadied by you./ My love is moved, my soul is not;/ my blood, but not my sense, is shaken by the sight of you./ Your pale old age drew water from my eyes, but my mind is a flaming furnace.)

This scene of spectatorship locates sensibility (but not sense) in the entrails, and anticipates and encourages the reaction of the reader who, presented with the graphic imagery splattered over d'Aubigné's canvas, will be moved yet resolute in their Reformist loyalty. In insisting on the direct, sympathetic resonance between spectacle and tears (and between 'sang' and 'sang' in line 923), to the exclusion of the mind—which might otherwise be assumed to mediate here—d'Aubigné's scene of pathos also anticipates, it might be argued, twenty-first-century theories of affect.⁴² We note here, too, a second occurrence of the rhyme of 'entrailles' with 'batailles', a pairing that recurs frequently in poetry of the civil wars, and perhaps contributes to the frequency of intestinal metaphor.

In the seventh and last book of *Les Tragiques*, anxieties concerning the potential disintegration of the state are once more figured through the emergence of unnatural offspring, though this time the family takes avian, and then reptilian form:

Le ciel n'est plus si riche à nos nâtités,
 Il ne nous départ plus de générosités,
 Ou bien nous trouverions de ces engeances hautes
 Si les mères du siècle y faisaient moins de fautes:
 Ces œufs en un nid ponds, et en l'autre couvés,
 Se trouvent œufs d'aspic quand ils sont éprouvés;
 Plus tôt ne sont éclos que ces mortels vipères
 Fichent l'ingrat fiçon dans le sein des faux pères.⁴³

(The heavens no longer look so kindly on the births of our kind,/ we no longer inherit moral noblesse,/or rather we might find honorable offspring/ if the mothers of our age were more free of sin:/ these eggs, laid in one nest and incubated in another, turn out to be asp eggs;/ no sooner are they hatched than those deadly vipers/ plunge their thankless fangs into the breast of their supposed fathers.)

In this strange and rare instance, accusations of infidelity against the wife of prominent Huguenot general Henri de Bourbon provoke a gender switch; it is now a father's breast bloodied by the attack of a monstrous progeny, the venom not feeding but emanating from these illegitimate, usurping, vipers in the nest. In the final, apocalyptic section of d'Aubigné's epic work, the 'venin' evoked by Mother France in the opening book silently returns, ouroboros-like, to bite the breast of the would-be heads of a stumbling Reformist lineage.

V. Conclusion

So you can get stuck in [...] the tragedy of realizing that trying to escape the web of fate is the web of fate. Yet within the melancholia is an unconditional sadness. And within the sadness is beauty. [...] Laughter inside tragedy. Comedy, the possibility space of which tragedy is a rare form. Comedy, the genre of coexistence.⁴⁴

As is abundantly and dizzyingly apparent from these examples, Ronsard's and d'Aubigné's figuring of both political and ecological environments through bodies, and entrails in particular, is bound up with the poets' reading and 'digestion' of Age of Gold *topoi*. As we have seen, the symbolism of intestinal imagery is dual, with the combination of physical and affective reference packing an extra punch. But the broader picture that has emerged is not a simple triangulation of political and environmental themes through the shared image of the body. It is something more like a web, or maze, of images, with birds brooding on snakes' eggs, vipers hatching or re-emerging from a mother's belly as uncanny entrails, winged mammals taking flight, and fertility run amok in the 'peuple avorton' decried by Ronsard's Justice. The referential slipperiness of a single term such as 'entrailles' serves to emblemize the twists and turns to be followed

as metaphors in French Renaissance poetry are extended or shape-shifted, sometimes leading round, infuriatingly, to back where we started. But rather than hearing this as a pessimistic note on which to end, I want to make a positive case for the ‘weirdness’ of Renaissance analogy.

In the introduction to an earlier eco-critical work, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, Morton points to a parallel between the dual fetishisations of the ‘natural’ and the ‘feminine’: ‘Putting something called Nature on a pedestal and admiring it from afar does for the environment what patriarchy does for the figure of Woman. It is a paradoxical act of sadistic admiration’.⁴⁵ The ‘dark ecology’ Morton proposes in his 2016 work is a continuation of this line of critical thinking, a rebuttal of and remedy to that toxic conception of ‘Nature-with-a-capital-N’. If we return to the emblematic first passage quoted in this chapter, we might reconsider the curious move by which d’Aubigné shifts from lamenting the laceration of the breast of Mother France to defending the ‘just’ cause of battle on the ‘field’ of her body. This might seem, at first, to exemplify a combination of these sadistic impulses. But the weirdly entangled and overlapping images of this poetic landscape seem, on the contrary, to confront and confound the ‘impossibly tidy boundaries’ presupposed by agrilogistic thought. And as both civil war poets come to acknowledge, from their supposedly distinct ‘sides’, there is no escape from the interconnectedness of things, from coexistence.

One’s mother’s body, the biosphere isn’t some abject disgusting thing from which one must distinguish oneself. Underneath the disgust and the horrific uncanny is a type of melancholia, another Freudian term pointing to the indigestible physical and psychic memory trace of other beings within oneself. Indigestible, because once you think you’ve gotten rid of one, along comes another like the heads of the many-headed hydra.⁴⁶

D’Aubigné’s fundamentally pessimistic, eschatological perspective engenders a dark ecology of sorts; if both he and Ronsard express horror at—and through—scenes of ecological destruction, their responses also appear to anticipate two directions of attempted escape from what Morton terms the ‘agrilogistic feedback loop’: backwards, to a time before the advent of ‘agricultural sin’ (though as Morton argues ‘busting out only ever ends up doubling down on what it was trying to escape’);⁴⁷ or forwards, inexorably down, in order to get out (‘Let’s make it down into the sadness and proceed further down from there’)⁴⁸

¹ See Morton, *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence*, 38-39.

² Ibid., 119.

³ For a detailed study of entrails and early modern mining, see Phillip John Usher, *On the Exterranean: Towards an Ecology of Extraction in the Humanist Anthropocene (forthcoming)*, Chapters 3-4.

⁴ Morton, *Dark Ecology*, 72, 73.

⁵ Agrippa D’Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, Book I: ‘Misères’, 80, ll. 97-110.

⁶ For a fuller account of the workings of this maternal body in D'Aubigné and Ronsard (also discussed here, below), see Keller, Chapter 2: 'Mother France and Her Dysfunctional Family: Religious and National Imagery in Ronsard's *Discours* and *Continuation* and in d'Aubigné's *Tragiques*', 41-76.

⁷ 'Misères', 82, ll. 187-190.

⁸ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. Richard John Tarrant (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), III, ll. 122-124. Translation by A.D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986; repr. 2008).

⁹ 'Misères', 79, ll. 89-96

¹⁰ See Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 162-164 and 221-226; especially 226: 'These images create with great artistry an extremely dense atmosphere of the body as a whole in which all the dividing lines between man and beast, between the consuming and consumed bowels are intentionally erased'.

¹¹ Morton, *Dark Ecology*, 119.

¹² On the 'weird' and the 'loopy', see especially *ibid.*, 6-9.

¹³ Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines*, 32.

¹⁴ See Maclean, 'Foucault's Renaissance Episteme Reassessed: An Aristotelian Counterblast', 165; by the same author see also *Le Monde et les hommes selon les médecins de la Renaissance*, Chapter 5, 'Postface post-foucauldienne', 111-121.

¹⁵ Latour, Bruno, *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes: Essai d'anthropologie symétrique*, 9. Translation by Catherine Porter: *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 2.

¹⁶ Steven Shavio, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics*, 'Preface: A Philosophical Fantasy', ix-xvi.

¹⁷ Morton, *Dark Ecology*, 7.

²¹ O'Brien, 'Intestinal disorders', in *Writers in Conflict in Sixteenth-Century France: Essays in honour of Malcolm Quainton*, 239-258. On intestinal and other confessionally charged corporeal imagery in the Wars of Religion, see also Banks, 'Interpretations of the Body Politic and of Natural Bodies in Late Sixteenth-Century France', 205-218; Williams, "'L'Humanité du tout perdue?": Early Modern Monsters, Cannibals and Human Souls', 235-256.

²² L'Hospital, 'Discours du 12 décembre 1560, Parlement, Paris', 403-404, ll. 461-481.

²³ L'Hospital, 'Discours du 3 janvier 1562, Assemblée politique restreinte, Saint-Germain-en-Laye', 437, ll. 117-125. Cf., for an overtly polemic counterpoint, Dorléans, *Avertissement, Des Catholiques Anglois aux François Catholiques, du danger où ils sont de perdre leur Religion, et d'experimenter, comme en Angleterre, la cruauté des Ministres, s'ils reçoivent à la Couronne un Roy qui soit Hérétique. En ceste dernière edition augmenté*; a pamphlet that employs extended medical analogy to describe the ravages of heresy on the body politic: 'Il nous suffit, pour conclure les estranges accez de vostre maladie, de vous représenter le corps de vostre estat, pasle, maigre et deffiguré', 11.

²⁴ This is explored compellingly by Mackenzie in *The Poetry of Place: Lyric, Landscape, and Ideology in Renaissance France*; see especially Chapter 5, 'The Poet and the Environment: Naturalizing Conservative Nostalgia', 121-145. For Mackenzie, Ronsard, in his impassioned defence of the Gâtine, is not acting in proto-conservationist fervour, nor speaking 'a discourse of a minority oppressed by the violent exclusivity of nationhood', but creating an exclusive and privileged ideological space.

²⁵ Agricola, *De re metallica*, 6-7; *De re metallica libri XII*, 4.

²⁶ *De re metallica*, 8: '[...] cum multo magis alienum sit ab hominis terreni animalis uita maris interiora, quam terræ uiscera scrutari.'

²⁷ The most comprehensive study of this commonplace in Ronsard's works is Armstrong, *Ronsard and the Age of Gold*.

²⁸ Pierre de Ronsard, *Œuvres complètes*, 474, ll. 37-46. Further references to this edition will refer to *OC*.

²⁹ It is worth noting here that, by tracing the alterations made by Ronsard over the course of various editions of his works, we find that in his *Franciade* he once replaced a mother's 'ventre', her womb, with 'entrailles', suggesting that, in the context of this feminized landscape-body, the 'entrails' of the earth are, logically enough, also the uterine locus of fertility. It is also striking that, of all of the illustrations in the anatomy book from which the image on these pages is taken, the backdrop to this diagram of the intestines is the most 'earthy'. The images depicting women's anatomy, on the other hand, are 'posed' interior scenes, often on beds, their bodies reclining in a series of disconcertingly eroticized, passive poses.

³⁰ Later, d'Aubigné also evokes a female-embodied figure of Justice through his portrayal of the image of Themis in 'La chambre dorée': see *Epic Arts in Renaissance France*, 178-179. If in Ronsard's vision,

Justice is linked to an irretrievable past, for d'Aubigné, as Usher argues, this timeless figure also points forward, to 'a future moment of vengeance'.

³¹ Ronsard, *OC* vol. II, 476, ll. 117-132.

³² Cf. *Metamorphoses* I. 128-147.

³³ The notion of Justice leaving the Earth by taking flight, or fleeing, is found in the classical sources: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (I. 148-149) and Aratus' *Phaenomena* (96-136); but these peculiarly hybrid animal attributes appear to be of Ronsard's own invention.

³⁴ Ronsard, *OC* vol. II, 999, ll. 91-94.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 161-163.

³⁶ *Tragiques*, 8.

³⁷ *Tragiques*, I, 'Misères', 80, ll. 127-130.

³⁸ On the relation of abjected bodies to the landscape underlying the *Tragiques*, and the transformation of Ovidian imagery in this text, see Long, 'Les rivières, sites de massacres et de mémoire dans *Les Tragiques*', 439-454.

³⁹ *Tragiques*, I, 'Misères', 81, l. 134.

⁴⁰ For a medicalized reading of this and other bodies in d'Aubigné, see Losse, *Syphilis: Medicine, Metaphor, and Religious Conflict in Early Modern France*, Chapter 6, 'Tragic Afflictions: D'Aubigné's *Tragiques*', 106-120. See also Prat, *Les Mots du corps: un imaginaire lexical dans les Tragiques d'Agrippa d'Aubigné*.

⁴¹ *Tragiques*, IV, 'Les Feux', 215 ll. 933-940.

⁴² See, for example, Massumi, *Parables For the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* Chapter 1, 'The Autonomy of Affect', 23-45, on autonomous (galvanic skin) responses to affective (as distinct from emotional) stimuli. Katherine Ibbett has offered thought- (and feeling-) provoking reflections on 'Affect' and the early modern in two recent publications: 'When I Do, I Call it Affect', *Paragraph*, 2017, 40.2, 244-253; and *Compassion's Edge: Fellow-Feeling and its Limits in Early Modern France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

⁴³ *Tragiques*, VII, 'Jugement', 310-311, ll. 201-208

⁴⁴ Morton, *Dark Ecology*, 119

⁴⁵ Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, 5.

⁴⁶ Morton, *Dark Ecology*, 118-119

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.